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Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 AID-05 TRSE-00 EB-08
COME-00 AGRE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-07 IGA-02 /112 W
----------100756Z 107362 /11
R 060920Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4742
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KIGALI 398

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, MILI, RW, LY
SUBJECT: HABYARIMANA TO VISIT TRIPOLI

REF KIGALI 274 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: RWANDAN PRESIDENT WILL MAKE "PRIVATE VISIT" TO TRIPOLI FOLLOWING STATE VISIT TO FRANCE NEXT WEEK. FRENCH AMBASSADOR SUSPECTS RWANDANS ARE BEING TRAPPED IN SOVIET-INSPIRED MOVE TO WEAN THEM AWAY FROM WEST. OUR OWN ESTIMATE IS THAT TRIPOLI STOP AIMS AT OBTAINING ARMS AID, PERHAPS IN EXCHANGE FOR HIGHLY CONCESSIONAL ECONOMIC TIES GRANTED TO LIBYA UNDER GUISE OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION. RWANDA'S NEWLY-DESIGNATED AMBASSADOR TO TRIPOLI, AN OLD AND GOOD FRIEND OF OURS, MAY HELP KEEP RELATIONS HONEST. END SUMMARY

1. FRENCH AMBASSADOR MANIERE TOLD ME YESTERDAY (AND RADIO CONFIRMED IT THIS EVENING) THAT PRES. HABYARIMANA PLANS TO VISIT TRIPOLI IMMEDIATELY AFTER COMPLETING HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO FRANCE NEXT WEEK (REFTEL) AND BEFORE ARRIVING
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IN DAKAR FOR OCAM SUMMIT. MANIERE'S PURELY PERSONAL SPECULATIONS AS TO PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STOP-OFF IN LIBYA WERE A BIT UNSETTLING.

2. IN A WORD, MANIERE WONDERED WHETHER RWANDANS WEREN'T BEING TAKEN IN BY LIBYANS SERVING AS CAT'S-PAW FOR SOVIET UNION. THERE HAS BEEN MUCH CRITICAL COMMENTARY HERE OF LATE

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ABOUT LIBYAN "AID" TO RWANDA WHICH SEEMS TO GIVE LIBYANS
EXTRAORDINARY LEVERAGE OVER RWANDAN ECONOMY AND FINANCES
(SEE KIGALI'S 229). MOST OUTSPOKEN CRITIC OF ALL HAS BEEN
NATIONAL BANK GOVERNOR BIRARA, WHO THREATENED TO RESIGN IF
PRESIDENT RATIFIED BANKING AGREEMENT RECENTLY CONCLUDED WITH
LIBYANS. TERMS OF THAT AGREEMENT WERE SUCH, IN BIRARA'S VIEW,
AS TO ALLOW LIBYA TO DRAIN RWANDA OF ALL ITS FOREIGN CURRENCY
HOLDINGS IF IT CHOSE TO DO SO. REPORTEDLY, PRESIDENT AGREED
TO MODIFY TERMS OF AGREEMENT TO PLACE RWANDAN LAW AHEAD OF
ANY TREATY OBLIGATIONS, AND BIRARA WAS APPARENTLY MOLLIFIED.
BUT OTHERS CONTINUE TO WONDER AT LIBYAN "LARGESSE", AND AT
RWANDA'S WILLINGNESS TO GRANT UNUSUAL PRIVELEGES IN RETURN,
ON A NUMBER OF LIBYAN AID PROJECTS RANGING FROM CONSTRUCTION
OF ELABORATE ISLAMIC MOSQUE AND DELUXE HOTEL TO
PARTNERSHIP IN OPERATING UNDP-BUILT TANNERY (WHEREIN LIBYA
WILL HAVE FOREIGN MARKETING RIGHTS FOR RWANDAN HIDES).

3. GIVEN INCAPACITATING WEAKNESS OF SOVIET DIPLOMATIC
INFLUENCE HERE (DUE IN PART TO INEFFECTIVE LOCAL REPS),
MANIERE WONDERED ALOUD WHETHER LIBYANS WEREN'T BEING
USED BY SOVIET FRIENDS TO GAIN POTENTIALLY WRECKING POSITION
OVER RWANDAN EXPORT ECONOMY (TANNERY AGREEMENT, IN THEORY AT
LEAST, ALLOWS THEM SPECIAL ROLE ON BOARD OF OCIR, PARASTATAL
AGENCY CONTROLLING PRODUCTION AND MARKETING OF COFFEE, TEA,
AND PYRETHRUM AS WELL AS HIDES). IN ADDITION, MANIERE SEES
DELICATE POLITICAL GAME GOING ON INSIDE GOR BETWEEN PRO- AND
ANTI-LIBYANS, ONEW WHICH LIBYA COULD CONCEIVABLY MANIPULATE
EITHER TO PLACE HABYARIMANA IN ITS DEBT OR TO TORPEDO HIM
IF HE PROVED RECALCITRANT.
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4. I TOLD MANIERE THAT I COULD NOT HONESTLY SEE SUCH
MACHIAVELLIAN IMPLICATIONS TO LIBYAN ROLE HERE. LIBYA, I
CONCEDED, SEEMED TO BE USING ITS PETRODOLLARS TO ADVANCE ITS
OWN COMMERCIAL, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL ENDS AS WELL AS TO
INGRATIATE ITSELF WITH RWANDANS. BUT I QUESTIONED WHETHER
LIBYA WAS REALLY OUT TO SUBVERT GOR AS PART OF LARGER SOVIET
OFFENSIVE IN CENTRAL AFRICA. AT SAME TIME, I HAD TO ADMIT I
HAD NO IDEA HOW LIBYA MIGHT FIT INTO LARGER SOVIET STRATEGY.

5. I NOTED NEVERTHELESS THAT GOR HAD JUST TAKEN UNFORTUNATE
STEP OF NAMING ONE OF ITS FEW REALLY TOPNOTCH PEOPLE, CELESTIN
KABANDA (FORMERLY AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON, CURRENTLY PREFET
OF REMOTE AND IMPOVERISHED GIKONGORO PREFECTURE), TO BE
AMBASSADOR TO TRIPOLI. KANBANDA IS SCHEDULED TO ASSUME HIS
NEW FUNCTION WITHIN TEN DAYS, OBVIOUSLY IN TIME TO BE THERE
FOR PRESIDENTIAL VISIT. I ADDED THAT I HAD HEARD FROM
A FONMIN SOURCE RECENTLY THAT LIBYAN CHARGE HERE (A PARTICU-
LARLY SMOOTH OPERATOR) WAS SOON TO BE PROMOTED TO RANK OF

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AMBASSADOR TO RWANDA.

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AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KIGALI 398

6. COMMENT: I STRESS THAT MANIERE'S VIEWS WERE PRESENTED AS BEING STRICTLY PERSONAL AND SPECULATIVE, BUT HE OBVIOUSLY SHARES WORRIES OF OTHER WESTERNERS THAT RWANDAN-LIBYAN TIES ARE A BIT UNNATURAL IN TERMS OF STRICT RWANDAN SELF-INTEREST (EXCEPT THAT GOR WILL ACCEPT ALMOST ANYTHING LABELED "DEVELOPMENTAL" FROM ALMOST ANYONE). IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO ME TO HAVE WASHINGTON'S AND TRIPOLI'S VIEWS, HOWEVER, AS TO WHETHER MANIERE'S HYPOTHESIS IN ANY WAY FITS INTO WHAT MAY BE KNOWN OF SOVIET AND/OR LIBYAN STRATEGIES IN CENTRAL AFRICA.

7. MY OWN ESTIMATE IS THAT TRIPOLI VISIT IS PART OF GOR SEARCH FOR MILITARY HARDWARE--AND PERHAPS A HEDGE AGAINST RWANDA'S GROWING IDENTIFICATION WITH THE WEST. SENIOR GOR OFFICIALS, INCLUDING FONMIN, HAVE REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED CONCERN TO ME LATELY REGARDING SOVIET INROADS AND USSR WEAPONS SHIPMENTS TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. DISAPPOINTED AT BELGIUM'S NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR NEW ARMS DELIVERIES, RWANDANS MAY HAVE FOUND SYMPATHETIC EAR IN LIBYANS. INDEED, PRELIMINARY MILITARY ASSISTANCE DISCUSSIONS MAY HAVE OCCURRED ALREADY IN KIGALI, PERHAPS EXPLAINING PRESIDENT'S UNUSUAL
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PLACATING MANNER VIS-A-VIS LIBYAN DEMANDS ON ECONOMIC FRONTS.

8. FOR TRIPOLI: I WARMLY COMMEND AMB. KABANDA TO YOUR ATTENTIVE CARE. HE HAS BEEN AND I BELIEVE CONTINUES TO BE A VERY GOOD FRIEND OF U.S. HE WAS EX-PRESIDENT KAYIBANDA'S EMISSARY TO WASHINGTON (1964-1969) AND ITALY (1969-1972). NEVERTHELESS, FOLLOWING 1973 COUP AND POLITICAL HOUSECLEANING, PRES. HABYARIMANA DEMONSTRATED POLITICAL CONFIDENCE IN KABANDA BY ASSIGNING HIM AS PREFET OF RUHENGERI, WHERE OFFICIALS OF THE FORMER REGIME WERE HELD PENDING TRIAL. IN 1974 HE TRANSFERRED TO GIKONGORO. DEDICATED AND HIGHLY ENERGETIC, HE DID MUCH TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS IN POOR GIKONGORO AND COOPERATED CLOSELY WITH US ON SEVERAL SELF-HELP PROJECTS. HE IS NOT AT ALL HAPPY ABOUT BEING SENT TO TRIPOLI, AND I EXPECT HE WOULD WELCOME CLOSE CONTACTS WITH EMBASSY. HE MAY BE RWANDA'S BEST HOPE FOR KEEPING LIBYANS HONEST.
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TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, MILI, RW, LY, (HABYARIMANA, JUVENAL)
To: STATE TRIPOLI
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